

Opening Statement of
The Honorable Ralph Hall, Ranking Republican
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
May 17, 2007

Building and Maintaining a Healthy and Strong NASA Workforce

I want to thank Chairman Udall for holding today's important hearing. I'd also like to welcome the witnesses, and thank them for coming before us today to help us better understand NASA's workforce challenges and the strategy to address them.

NASA has a unique and interesting set of missions, and all of us on this committee want NASA to successfully accomplish the missions that have been laid out. Everything that NASA does depends on its ability to maintain a highly-qualified and competent workforce. Developing the right mix of skills, and keeping people engaged in challenging work as budgets and program priorities change, requires a continuing commitment.

NASA faces a number of workforce challenges over the next few years including retiring the space shuttle in 2010 while simultaneously completing the International Space Station, and developing the new Orion Crew Exploration Vehicle and Ares launch system. NASA's Aeronautics programs have been refocused, shifting away from technology demonstrations and toward long-term basic research. NASA's vital Science programs have faced difficult changes as well. Furthermore, in addition to technical, scientific, and engineering challenges, the Agency also faces daunting financial management challenges that it has been largely unable to address in part because of a lack of qualified financial auditors and administrators.

These pressures are unlikely to go away. In fact they will almost certainly continue in the future. Things are always changing – that's the nature of science and technology – but the workforce must adapt to the changes, and the Agency bears a responsibility to employees and its stakeholders, including Congress, to develop a strategy to effectively address the changes.

In April 2006, NASA released its Workforce Strategy document as required by the *NASA Authorization Act of 2005*. The National Research Council and the National Academy of Public Administration have each reviewed NASA's strategy and offered thoughtful perspectives. I look forward to hearing from them today. I also look forward to hearing from the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers.

The workforce is so vital to NASA's mission. NASA must constantly evaluate its future needs, and be ready and able to take pre-emptive actions when necessary to ensure the right people are there to do the exciting and challenging missions, and continue to accomplish extraordinary scientific discoveries.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses. And with that, I yield back the balance of my time.